

Jacques-Alain Miller, his enjoyment and the desire of psychoanalysis^{1*}

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An idea serves to think. The idea of the desire of psychoanalysis, as conceived by Gabriel Tupinambá,² allows us to think of something that would be unthinkable without that idea. Thanks to Tupinambá, we can now think of a desire that operates in psychoanalysis and that does not correspond to the unique desires of the analyst and the analysand. In addition to these different and somehow conflicting desires, there is a third one that is in some way shared by the analyst and the analysand.

As Tupinambá says, there is a desire to “participate in the idea of the unconscious.”³ There is a desire on which the “commitment to the hypothesis of the unconscious” is founded.⁴ This desire, as Tupinambá also warns, refers not to “to some ideal that analysts should strive to apply in their practice, but to that in psychoanalysis which remains other to the current state of psychoanalytic thinking”.⁵

The desire of psychoanalysis points to the other, to what is beyond, to what is absent and not to what is present in the Freudian field. The desire of psychoanalysis is a desire of the outside, not of the inside. It goes to the edges of the psychoanalytic world, to the unknown, to what exceeds the object of psychoanalysis, not to what is contained in it. We have here a desire in the most radical sense of the term: a desire of desire; desire for the condition of desire; desire of the outside, not only of what is outside; desire of the world in its exteriority, not desire to absorb the world and thus make it interior.

Tupinambá lucidly explains that the desire of psychoanalysis, “desire to partake in the historical inscription of psychoanalysis into the world”, is “subtracted from the superegoic injunction to structurally inscribe the whole world into psychoanalysis”.⁶ In other words, the desire of psychoanalysis in the world is not an imperative to swallow the world, encompassing it with psychoanalysis, reducing it to psychoanalytic concepts. This incorporation excludes the world as well as desire.

The desire of psychoanalysis in the world has nothing to do with the command to understand the world psychoanalytically. This superegoic injunction exists in psychoanalysis, but it is not even a command to desire. Rather, it is a command of jouissance, of jouissance understood as possession, as Lacan understands it in Seminar 14⁷.

Psychoanalysis wants to possess the world, to enjoy it, when the superego mandate is imposed to encompass the world, contain it, understand it with psychoanalytic concepts and exercise power over it, theoretical power, but also institutional and economic power, and political power. This is what happens, for example, when psychoanalytic theory offers answers and explanations for everything, serves any task assigned to it, and allows positions to be taken in all fields. Psychoanalysis then usurps the place of economics, politics and other knowledge and practices,

and thus becomes an ideology, as Lev Vygotsky had already observed in 1927, coinciding with Tupinambá in his diagnosis.

Going beyond its sphere, psychoanalytic theory becomes ideology. This ideology has nothing to do with the desire of psychoanalysis. Rather, it is a jouissance of psychoanalysis, a psychoanalytic enjoyment of the world, a jouissance without desire, without the desire that operates as “a defense that keeps jouissance on its horizon of impossibility”, as Néstor Braunstein would say.⁸

We can apply to psychoanalysis, then, the jouissance / desire distinction that has been so emphasized by Jacques-Alain Miller and his followers. We can even adopt the unpleasant normative character of this distinction and affirm that there is a pathological enjoyment of psychoanalysis that is opposed to a salutary desire of psychoanalysis. We can then conclude by diagnosing the Millerian current as a good historical example of the pathological jouissance of psychoanalysis, although simultaneously recognizing that this jouissance does not constitute a betrayal of Lacan, but rather has its origin in something that Tupinambá reveals to us within Lacanian theory.

It is from Lacan that Miller has inherited his enjoyment of psychoanalysis. He inherited it through his careful and accurate reading of Lacanian theory, but perhaps also through what Miller himself has recently confessed to us in parodying Me Too. I refer to what Miller suffered, the “indescribable and incessant abuse of authority” by Lacan, a “moral and spiritual incest” where the victim “felt a certain pleasure” and “remained divided forever.”⁹

Miller’s division, the division between desire and jouissance in psychoanalysis, should serve us at least as a teaching that jouissance does not absolutely exclude desire. The relationship between the two is dialectical. We must not forget what Lacan explained to us in Seminar X: that desire appears between the subject and jouissance, “closer” than jouissance, in its “anticipation” by the subject.¹⁰ Nor should we forget what Lacan raises in Seminar V about the “jouissance of desire.”¹¹

Miller not only enjoys psychoanalysis; he enjoys the desire of psychoanalysis. This endangers desire, but it does not matter, as long as it can be possessed, as long as it can be legally monopolized, as long as we can profit from it and exercise power over it. To enjoy the desire of psychoanalysis is to enjoy psychoanalysis by psychoanalytically enjoying the world. There are no clear distinctions here between the world, psychoanalysis, and the desire of psychoanalysis, because jouissance overrides these differences. This is also why it overrides desire, a desire of psychoanalysis conditioned by the difference of psychoanalysis with respect to the rest.

Instead of difference and desire, there is jouissance and confusion. There is confusion first between the psychoanalytic sphere and the world as such, but then also between the concept and the subject, between the theoretical and the clinical, between what is thought and who thinks, between what is proposed by the father-in-law and the son-in-law who transmits it. So is the

incestuous confusion between Lacan and Miller and the Millerians. It is the moral and spiritual incest that Miller himself prefers to joke with.

The confusions to which I refer can be glimpsed through the experiences recounted by Slavoj Žižek in the preface to Tupinambá's book. Žižek refers to Millerians who can only think and do what Miller thinks and does, and who treat clinically, as a symptom, any theoretical or political discrepancy in relation to Lacan and Miller. They are the same people who only allow themselves to paraphrase Lacan, who only allow themselves to speak Lacanese and see the world through their Lacano-Millerian glasses. What we have here is not just a sect, a mass phenomenon, but a pure and simple cancellation of the differences between singular subjects, between the theoretical and the clinical, between the interior and the exterior of psychoanalysis.

Millerism is the dissolution of difference and otherness. It is the realm of confusion, of unity and sameness, which is the realm of enjoyment. The Millerians enjoy the only official and legitimate version of Lacan's seminars, that of Miller, just as they enjoy the only acceptable reading of Lacanian theory, the Millerian one, and just as they also enjoy the only adequate psychoanalysis, the Lacanian-Millerian one, which allows them to enjoy the only correct interpretation of the world. All this jouissance of the Millerians is of course that of Miller, the prototype of the leader, the matrix of the ideal, the superego of Millerism, the primitive father, *le grand fouteur*, who, like many Sade characters, needs of the enjoyment of others to be able to enjoy.

Like desire, the enjoyment of psychoanalysis is shared by Millerians. What they share is what they enjoy, especially their ideology, as it unfolds in their interpretation of the world. This interpretation is ideological and has a religious meaning, transcendent, only intelligible for the initiated. It is something that seems to come from outside the world and that is why it allows us to cover the entire world. It is a metalanguage. Even if it were because of their adherence to Lacan, Millerians should deny this metalanguage, but they prefer to enjoy it.

Tupinambá traces the origin of the Millerian Other of the Other. This metalanguage has its roots in Lacan and in his unrestricted adoption of the structural linguistics model for psychoanalysis in 1953. The Saussurean model was originally intended to serve to elucidate and illustrate some aspects of the Freudian field, but finally it allowed Lacan to assimilate speech to the signifier, the unconscious to language and the subject of the unconscious to the subject of the signifier. The result was that the model appeared to no longer be a simple model. It replaced the material world, formally codifying it in such a way that it could be possessed, enjoyed by those who knew the code, by the Lacanians.

The material world was reduced to a model to be enjoyed, in the sense of Cortázar's model kit, model to be assembled, freely interpreted by the reader.¹² The absolutization of the model in Lacan and later in Miller, as Tupinambá shows very well after Badiou, "erased its own material conditions of possibility".¹³ The subject, speech and the unconscious disappeared after their formal codification in the ideal model of the signifier, which, in turn, was fetishized and thus in some way materialized.

The signifier pretends to be the material world, but it is nothing more than a fetishistic materialization of an ideal model used to think about the material world. This typically idealistic operation is well known to Marxists and could have been corrected and reversed when Lacanian theory came into contact with Marxism, as happened, for example, in the 1960s, at the *École Normale Supérieure*. It was the best time to limit the enjoyment of psychoanalysis, to preserve the desire of psychoanalysis, and that was what happened, but only at the beginning, partly thanks to Jacques-Alain Miller.

At first, in 1964, in his text “Action of the structure”, Miller still recognizes an otherness by which psychoanalysis is limited.¹⁴ This otherness is that of Marxism. For the Miller of 1964, the Marxist and the Freudian discourse, refined respectively by Althusser and by Lacan, are the two discourses of overdetermination that mutually limit each other and that articulate one with the other outside of science.

By having their field in the exteriority foreclosed by science, Marxism and psychoanalysis are certainly beyond the limits of the scientific “fence” and its “closed field.”¹⁵ Science is limited, while Althusserian and Lacanian discourses refer to what is beyond the limits. Both discourses seem unlimited, but in reality they limit each other, which does not prevent them, as Miller says at the end of his 1964 text, “communicate with each other via regulated transformations, and might reflect one another in a unitary theoretical discourse.”¹⁶ This Marxist-Freudian discourse is only mentioned in 1964. Miller does not specify or explain it. He also does not clarify how Marxism and psychoanalysis will be articulated in a single discourse.

The unitary theoretical discourse to which Miller refers in the text “Action of the structure” remains suspended, but ends up becoming, two years later, the “logic of the signifier” proposed in the famous text “Suture”.¹⁷ It is as if the 1966 text provided an answer to the 1964 text. However, unlike the 1964 unitary discourse, the 1966 logic of the signifier does not articulate the discourse of Marxism with that of psychoanalysis.

In 1964, Miller still perceived the limits of psychoanalysis and wanted to overcome them by combining psychoanalysis with Marxism. We are here in a logic of no Freud without Marx, no Lacan without Althusser, no psychoanalysis without Marxism. On the contrary, in 1966, as Tupinambá shows very well, Miller absolutizes psychoanalysis through the model of structural linguistics.

The logic of the signifier derives only from the discourse of psychoanalysis, which can thus suffice itself to encompass all other fields, possessing them and thus reducing the world to its field of enjoyment. Starting in 1966, Lacanian theory allows Miller and Millerism to enjoy everything else, first through the logic of the signifier and then through other equally invasive and imperialist theoretical devices. These devices serve Miller to master all fields of knowledge and human experience.

The ideological overreach of Miller's enterprise has recently reached a symptomatic point by also embracing politics. Suddenly, with the *Zadig* movement, we discover a Millerian politics that continues to be justified with a certain version of psychoanalysis. The Freudian-Lacanian discourse is no longer articulated with the Marxist discourse as in 1964, but is entangled with itself, giving rise to a subtle translation of the dominant rightist tendencies.

Any political project is carried away when it lacks a solid, well-founded and established radical alternative anchor, such as that of Marxism. In the absence of the Marxist discourse with which it had to be articulated in 1964, Miller's project has been carried away by media suggestion, by the *pensée unique*, by the banalities of neoliberal democracy and its rule of law. All of this is disguised in Lacanian jargon, but Miller is increasingly clear on his political positions. In France, in the last presidential elections, he took a position against Mélenchon's left and called for a vote from the first round for Macron's right, openly admitting that his option for Macron was an option for the "money candidate", for the "financial option", for the "big capital".¹⁸ Meanwhile, in Latin America, Miller systematically ignored the repression and undemocratic authoritarianism of neoliberal regimes, but not of left-wing populist governments.

It is true that Miller has said that he considers himself a leftist and even a Marxist. What is certain is that he speaks of the left as if he were not part of it, detaching himself from it, condemning it as a whole for its "narcissism of a lost cause"¹⁹ or for its "Gnosticism" that makes it consider that "the world is bad" and "turn its back on it."²⁰ Apparently Miller no longer understands the struggle of the left against the existing reality and for the transformation of the world. At the same time, Miller shows a certain weakness for the right, which does not prevent him from repudiating the extreme right, like any well-thinking, politically correct person, and in accordance with the ruling ideology, the ideology of the ruling class.

Miller accepts that he is a bourgeois. He also recognizes that his option is that of the capital that won the last elections in France. Millerian politics is the neoliberal politics against which the *Nuit Debout* and *Gilets Jaunes* movements protested. It is the politics of the conventional mass media.

Miller's politics is pretty ordinary. It lacks interest. What is interesting is elsewhere, in Miller's *jouissance*, in his enjoyment of politics, of speech and power, of psychoanalysis and the world.

The interesting thing is the way in which Miller turns his Lacanian jargon into a metalanguage that allows him to enjoy the world, make fun of everything and place himself above the left and the right, judging them from the outside and from above, just as any extreme rightist does. Miller offers himself the *jouissance* of the extreme right. Three or four years ago he enjoyed being European and describing Argentina as "the ass of the world".²¹ He now enjoys talking about gender theory as ideology²² and mocking feminists, transsexuals and decolonials.²³ Miller can thus know the enjoyment of the far right, the *jouissance* of antifeminism and transphobia and coloniality, without being a far rightist. And how does he get it? Very simple: he says that he is

against the extreme right and speaks with a metalanguage that pretends to be outside the only language of politics.

Millerian politics pretends to be a kind of metapolitics. This is Zadig's politics. It is a politics that includes politics and everything else. It is perfectly fascist, but harmless, thanks to its insignificance. It is a kind of theoretical microfascism. Its political impact is minimal, but it exists, as could be seen in the last French elections, in which Miller provided some votes to the right.

The metalanguage also serves Miller to give a transcendent justification to his politics and impose it on his loyal followers, deciding what they think and for whom they vote, always in the name of Lacan. This is how Millerians get caught up in Miller's enjoyment, possessed by him, spellbound by his word. When one resists, like Jorge Alemán, he is immediately disqualified.

Nothing can escape Miller's jouissance. When something escapes, it is paradoxically condemned as a form of jouissance. The conclusion is clear: in the horde there is only room for the enjoyment of the father. This can be clearly seen in a text written by Éric Laurent, an impeccable Millerian, in the context of the French presidential elections of 2017. Laurent sharply distinguishes: on the one hand, the salutary vote of desire, the useful vote for Macron, which is the vote prescribed by Miller; on the other hand, any other vote, which would be the pathological vote of jouissance, since, according to Laurent, "the opposite of utility is always jouissance."²⁴

In Millerian normativity, in which enjoyment is pathologized, the only way not to enjoy is to obey Miller, submit to his jouissance, which is also the only jouissance secretly authorized for Millerians. This enjoyment must be authorized because it opens the way for desire. Laurent then finds desire in the Millerian enjoyment of psychoanalysis, in Lacanian ideology full of itself and excluding any exteriority.

It goes without saying that Laurent's desire, even though it may be a desire of psychoanalysis, has nothing to do with Tupinambá's desire of psychoanalysis. It does not point to the outside of the Freudian field, but to its interior. It is a desire that can also be enjoyed through psychoanalysis. Everything is here an opportunity for jouissance.

Notes

[←1]

* Paper for the symposium on Gabriel Tupinambá's *The Desire of Psychoanalysis*, May 7th, 2021.

[←2]

Gabriel Tupinambá, *The Desire of Psychoanalysis: Exercises in Lacanian Thinking*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 2021.

[←3]

Ibid., p. 93.

[←4]

Ibid., p. 112.

[←5]

Ibid., p. 4.

[←6]

Ibid., p. 15.

[←7]

Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire, livre XIV, La logique du fantasme (1966-1967)*. Unpublished. April 19th 1967.

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[←9]

Jacques-Alain Miller, Docile au trans, *Lacan Quotidien* 928, 25 de abril 2021, p. 5.

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Lacan, *Le séminaire, livre X, L'angoisse (1962-1963)*, Paris, Seuil, 2004, p. 204.

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Julio Cortázar, *62 / Modelo para armar* (1968), Barcelona, Ediciones B, 1988.

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[←14]

Jacques Alain Miller, Action de la structure, *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* 9 (1968), pp. 93-105.

[←15]

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[←16]

Ibid., p. 103.

[←17]

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[←18]

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[←22]

Éric Marty et Jacques-Alain Miller, Entretien sur « Le sexe des modernes », *Lacan Quotidien* 927, March 29th 2021, <https://lacanquotidien.fr/blog/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/LQ-927-A.pdf>

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Miller, Docile au trans, *Lacan Quotidien* 928, April 25th 2021, retrieved from <https://lacanquotidien.fr/blog/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/LQ-928.pdf>

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Eric Laurent, Populismo e acontecimiento del cuerpo. *Lacan Quotidien* 694, May 12 2017, retrieved from <http://www.lacanquotidien.fr/blog/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/LQ-694-1.pdf>